

PRESS RELEASE
Tuesday 7 July 2026

YOUR MUSIC, YOUR WAY: BOURNEMOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA'S MUSIC-MAKING COMPETITION IS BACK



Judges include practitioners from across the music sector

- People across the UK are preparing to have their music heard as the **BSO Music-Making Competition** returns for a second year, sponsored by **Lark Music**, part of **Howden**.
- Entry is free: non-professional UK-based instrumentalists (18+) can apply by **3 September**.
- The panel of industry judges includes broadcaster and writer **Tom Service**, guitarist **Dagan Wilkin**, and presenter **Helen Arney**. Winners will be announced in the autumn.
- Simply submit one short video from any genre to win a share of the **£3,000 cash prize pot***.
- To enter the competition, visit **bsolive.com/create**.

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Lark Music announce the return of the BSO Music-Making Competition, following last year's popular debut in which people from across the UK submitted home recordings.

The UK-wide competition is for **non-professional instrumentalists** to share the music they love and be heard by a brilliant panel of industry judges – if music-making isn't the day job, this is the competition to enter.

Sponsored by Lark Music, there is a **£1,000 cash prize for each age category**, spanning 18-24, 25-39, and 40 plus. Performances which display confidence and control will impress the judging panel, with notes and rhythms that feel clear and intentional – as will recordings displaying musicians at ease with their instruments.

Winners of the 2025 inaugural event included: student **Amy Jerman** from Wareham, Dorset; counsellor and manager **Llewella White** from London; and former art teacher **Rob Johnston**, from Southsea, Hampshire. The winners deepened their creativity, aspiring to record projects and experience more live music.

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's Chief Executive, Dougie Scarfe OBE, said:

"The BSO Music-Making Competition exists to get people creating music – to pick up a new instrument, or revisit an old one, and simply start playing. If you're over 18 and music isn't the day job, then this is for you. Feel free to let your creativity roam, taking any genre or musical instrument as your starting point."

"We're deeply grateful to our partners at Lark Music for supporting the competition, and for their shared faith in the awe-inspiring magic of instrumental music-making to lift and connect us all. Last year's competition saw the most amazing outpouring of creativity from across the UK: our brilliant panel of judges can't wait to experience your performances."

Lark Music Insurance's Partnership Account Executive, Brian Hillstead, said:

"Lark Music is an established brand within Howden, a leading global insurance intermediary group. For over 35 years, Lark Music has supported musicians by providing specialist, flexible and easy musical instrument insurance solutions. Drawing on deep sector knowledge and industry data through working with partnerships and organisations who are dedicated to making music accessible to everyone, Lark Music helps players stay focused on what matters: making music. This competition perfectly complements our passion for supporting musicians, and we're excited to hear and feel the passion of artists across genres and ages."

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra is a registered charity, which exists to bring music into people's lives. In addition to its world-class concert hall performances, the Orchestra supports people of all ages and backgrounds across creative health and wellbeing, music education and community music-making. Last year, it delivered almost 400 learning and participatory events, in more than 100 venues throughout the South West of England.

Lark Music, sponsor of the competition, is a specialist insurance provider dedicated to protecting musicians and their instruments. Through its partnership with the BSO, Lark Music is proud to support the Music-Making Competition and wider initiatives that give more people the opportunity to play, perform and be heard. Find out more about Lark Music's support of the BSO and the Music-Making Competition at larkmusic.com/bso

For full details and to enter, visit bsolive.com/create – entries close on Thursday 3 September, at 11.59pm. [ENDS]

NOTES TO EDITORS

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1. ***Note: £3,000 prize pot is split between three age categories. There is a £1,000 prize for winners in each age group: 18-24, 25-39 and 40 plus.**
2. **Judging panel:**
Presenter, Comedian and Musician **Helen Arney**
Sound Engineer **Chris Caton**
Musician **Tania Davis**
Conductor **Enyi Okpara**
Broadcaster and Writer **Tom Service**
Musician **Jesper Svedberg**
Guitarist, Presenter and Product Demonstrator **Dagan Wilkin**
3. **High-resolution images** available on request:
a) Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra ©Mark Allan
b) BSO Chief Executive, Dougie Scarfe OBE ©Corin Messer
b) Competition judges include Helen Arney, Chris Caton, Enyi Okpara and Dagan Wilkin (credits listed in filenames)
4. **ABOUT BOURNEMOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA** | bsolive.com

Chief Conductor – Mark Wigglesworth
Celebrated Composer – Thomas Adès | Artist-in-Residence – Boris Giltburg
Principal Guest Conductor – Chloé Van Soeterstède | Associate Guest Conductor – David Hill MBE
Conductor Laureate & Artistic Director, Voices from the East – Kirill Karabits OBE
Conductor Emeritus – Marin Alsop | Conductor Laureate – Andrew Litton
Calleva Assistant Conductor – Michal Oren

One of the UK's best-loved orchestras, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (BSO) is known for championing the role of culture in people's lives. Based at Lighthouse, Poole, the Orchestra is resident in Bristol, Exeter, Portsmouth, Southampton and Yeovil, and performs in towns and villages across the region. A registered charity, it is the largest performing organisation in the South West of England, serving one of the biggest and most diverse regions in the UK.

Mark Wigglesworth became the Orchestra's Chief Conductor in 2024, and his opening seasons have magnified the BSO's reputation for the highest quality music-making. The Orchestra boasts an enviable list of named conductors, including Principal Guest Conductor Chloé Van Soeterstède alongside Marin Alsop, David Hill MBE, Kirill Karabits, Andrew Litton and new Calleva Assistant Conductor, Michal Oren.

In 2026/27, the BSO welcomes Thomas Adès as its Celebrated Composer, in a series that shines a spotlight on new British music. The Orchestra shares eight performances, including one that Adès conducts – and local pupils will interact with his music through further events.

The Orchestra's two-year Beethoven celebration: Road to Joy runs from October 2026. Alongside symphonic performances, the series provides three immersive Beethoven Now weekends, delving deeper into the enduring legacy of the composer's music and humanity.

The BSO welcomes pianist Boris Giltburg as Artist-in-Residence, with five performances across the season. Further highlights include debut performances from conductor Charlotte Corderoy, pianists Junyan Chen, Eva Gevorgyan, Isata Kanneh-Mason, and violinist Johan Delane. The BSO's celebrated Digital Concert series



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continues into its seventh year, with 18 live performances broadcast globally from Poole – this year, supported by Digital Concert Sponsor, Lark Music.

Celebrated for its pioneering community-based BSO Participate work, the Orchestra brings music into people's lives beyond the concert hall thanks to a network of partnerships spanning health, care and music education; with a unique team of dynamic BSO Associate and Young Associate Musicians living in the heart of communities across the South West, it delivered more than 58,000 experiences last year. Its creative health programme continues to expand, with regular sessions at Dorset County Hospital, Dorset HealthCare sites, and Southampton Hospitals Charity. Several Community and Wellbeing Orchestras support a range of needs across the region from Bodmin, Boscombe and Bristol to Chard, Exeter, Newquay and Wincanton.

Following international attention for igniting change, BSO Resound, the world's first professional disabled-led ensemble at the core of a major orchestra, continues to challenge perceptions. The group joins conductors Tom Fetherstonhaugh and Enyi Okpara in 2026/27.

A National Portfolio of Arts Council England, the BSO is a registered charity and relies on generous philanthropic support from individual donors, gifts in wills, corporate partners, and charitable trusts and foundations.

5. **ABOUT LARK MUSIC INSURANCE** | larkmusic.com

Lark Music is part of Howden, a leading global insurance intermediary group with employee ownership at its heart. Founded in 1994, it provides insurance, reinsurance and underwriting services and solutions to clients ranging from private individuals to the largest multinational companies. The Group operates in 57 countries worldwide, employs over 24,000 people and manages premiums totally USD 50 billion on behalf of its clients.

For over 35 years, Lark Music has supported musicians by offering specialist, flexible and easy insurance solutions for musicians. We leave our customers free to focus on what is most important to them: making music happen, however they choose. Our passion for music underpins everything we do, from our personalised service to our partnerships with organisations who are dedicated to making music accessible to everyone.

For more information about Lark Music, our musical insurance policies, and the support we give to the music industry, visit larkmusic.com